

CONGRESSIONAL VISITS



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U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo, R-Egan, speaks to a group of citizens Friday morning at the Milledgeville Community Center during an "America Speaks Out" meeting. It was Manzullo's first in a series of meetings across the country being held by House Republicans as they seek direction from voters.

National effort vowed

Manzullo, Foster want a word with company closing local facilities

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STERLING - Something a Democrat and Republican can agree on: Closing the Stanley-National Hardware plant and offices and shipping about 370 jobs elsewhere is bad for the Sauk Valley. U.S. Reps. Bill Foster, D-Geneva, and Don Manzullo, R-Egan, both said Friday they want more information



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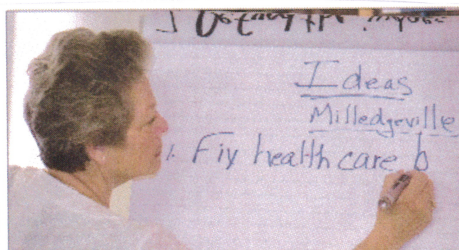
U.S. Rep. Bill Foster, D-Geneva, answers questions Friday afternoon from the editorial board of Sauk Valley Newspapers at its Sterling office.

from executives at Stanley Black & Decker about the Connecticut-based tool and

hardware manufacturer's decision to shutter the Rock Falls plant and Sterling office

just 5 years after buying them from local owners. Foster said he, U.S. Rep. Phil Hare, D-Rock Island, and U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., are drafting a joint letter to Stanley leadership, while Manzullo said he would like an audience with regional executives. All aim to discuss ways of keeping the legacy employer rooted in the Sauk Valley, where it has been for more than 100 years. "This is a polite request for information," Foster said, pulling a two-page letter draft from his pants pocket.

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Issues that were brought during Friday's "America Speaks Out" meeting with U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo, R-Egan, in Milledgeville were written on a board.

'Speaking Out' meetings seek voter input

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The letter's contents were confidential, he said. "If we can find some way to keep those jobs here, that would be ideal," Foster said. "If it's a business decision, then I respect that." Stanley announced last week that it planned to end operations here by spring next year. The representatives made their comments during interviews Friday with Sauk Valley Newspapers' editorial board. Among other common ground was a belief that the national debt must be reduced, and spending curtailed, or the national economy will not be able to recover and will be subject to the whims of international manipulation. Manzullo offered similar comments Friday morning at a town hall meeting

in Milledgeville, where he solicited input from constituents and explained to voters the rationale for some of his higher-profile votes. About 45 area residents, mostly from Carroll County, turned out for the meeting at the Milledgeville Community Center. It was Manzullo's first in a series of "America Speaks Out" meetings across the country as House Republicans seek direction from voters. Ellie Miller was one of the Milledgeville residents to attend the open forum. "I'm just sick and tired of government in general taking away our liberties," Miller said. "I believe government is redistributing wealth," she said of the economic stimulus package. Foster, who voted for the stimulus package, which "everyone loves to hate," said it was neces-

sary to prevent joblessness and unemployment not seen since the Great Depression. "What's happening now is not an accident but a mistake," Foster said of the national recession. It's the result of 30 years of picking away at regulatory frameworks that helped to support the middle class, he said. Foster likened the recession to a car wreck. "You can go off the road and into a ditch in 3 seconds, but it might take you a month, a year or 3 years to get fully back on the road," Foster said. The stimulus package is an investment that the federal government hopes to recoup with tax money generated by the economic turnaround, Foster said. Manzullo said it's a bad investment and poor fiscal policy. Of federal spending, Manzullo said, "You've just got to cut off the spigot."